

Summary of the Conscience Project Meeting 9-26-09

The meeting was conducted at Ethna's home. Present were Ethna, John, Jere, Matt, Deb, Meg, and Barb.

The summary from the previous meeting 6-27-09 was reviewed and accepted.

Jere Odell introduced himself. Jere is librarian at the IU Center for Bioethics. He had been contributing his time and energy in assisting Sue with improving **Conscience Works (CW)**. He reported that the infrastructure for the Digital Library using ScholarWorks was in place but as yet no contents from the current website had migrated over. Jere and Sue are recruiting an intern from the School of Library Science whose assignments will include establishing controlled vocabularies for **CW** content. The intern may also help with uploading actual content from **CW**. Jere also reported the second website had been set up. By August, Matt and Meg had completed the brief descriptions of the various contents of the existing **CW** Website requested by the librarians for the second website and sent them to Jere and Sue. A copy of the brief descriptions was circulated at today's meeting. Jere had previously recommended we capitalize on the WordPress technology in order to increase visibility of **CW** on the Web and draw traffic. Conscience Project; participants present were in agreement with the recommendation to take turns providing brief (200 words with links to other content on the Web; or at the long end, a thought piece of 1000 words), easy to read monthly posts relevant to recent research, news or other interesting items related to the scope of **CW**. Jere indicated he would do the first post. It was proposed that summaries of the quarterly meeting of the Conscience Project be included among the posts. These will first be edited with the removal of any personal information. John will do the third post a review of: Verkamp BJ: **The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times**. London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993.

Matt passed along to Ethna a recent copy of the CME journal **Psychiatric Annals** that both Matt and Meg had read. The issue was devoted entirely to synchronicity, a subject which had occasioned commentary from Carl Jung. Matt passed along regards from and encouraging words for the Conscience Project that Ted P. had e-mailed. For several years now Ted has included a citation to our work in a hand-out provided for his seminar. Ted said he was preparing a seminar on Moral Development for fellows this October and would check out Psychobiology of Conscience on **CW**. He also wondered if we had seen the article: Tierney J: Guilt and atonement on the path to adulthood, **New York Times** 8/25/09. Meg obtained that article and circulated a copy at today's meeting. G. Kochanska et al's latest studies in the August issue of **The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology** are highlighted in the brief report. The investigators designed an experiment with a toy rigged to break apart in the hands of very young children after they were admonished to be careful. The investigators found that 2 year olds who showed more chagrin during the broken toy experiment went on to have fewer behavioral problems over the ensuing five year period of observation. There followed comments about guilt and self control. Psychologist June Tangney was also interviewed. She emphasized the importance of parental teaching of amendatory behaviors.

Appropos our recent concerns with functional neuroimaging, Meg also circulated Fins JJ. Neuroethics and neuroimaging: moving toward transparency. *American Journal of Bioethics*. 2008 Sep;8(9):46-52. The essay was based on a paper delivered at the Working Meeting on Ethics Neuroimaging and Limited States of Consciousness at Stanford University, 6/28/07. Beginning with Disorders of Consciousness (such as vegetative states) and their patterns of metabolic activity, Fins (who is recipient of a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Investigator Award in Health Policy Research) proceeded to a consideration of neuroimaging studies and concluded with recommendations with respect to neuroimaging as follows: 1) be clear about ways in which we make an evaluation of brain states, 2) move beyond reports of snapshots of brain states and attempting to capture functional status against a time line, 3) conduct larger epidemiological assessment of patients (who have such disorders of consciousness), 4) adopt a prudential ethic and hold off on using the modalities under consideration in routine clinical practice until we know far more about their

operating characteristics, namely sensitivity and specificity and 5) set standards for interpretation and ensure that this area of competence is taken up in residency programs and included on certification exams.

Articles and presentations

Progress in completing transcriptions/elaborations of the Power Point PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF CONSCIENCE was made. The corrected version of THE PSYCHOBIOLOGY OF CONSCIENCE: *SIGNATURES IN BRAIN REGIONS OF INTEREST* was completed 8/23/09 and sent to Sue. It now appears on *CW Theory, Research and Clinical Applications* 3(1): 1-36, 2009.

Courses

Meg reported on this year's **Conscience Centered Psychiatric Ethics**, conducted annually for the third year psychiatry residents. The course had been on Wednesday afternoons 8/26, 9/2, 9/9 and 9/16. Meg reported that **Introduction to Clinical Medicine (ICM) I** had commenced 8/25. Meg and Matt orient their small group especially towards conscience development and conscience sensitive ethics. The first year medical students are paired with youth in a local residential facility to explore moral psychological developmental domains via conscience sensitive tasks. The work the paired learners do together becomes the springboard for the conscience group therapy Matt helps facilitate at the residential facility and ethics and professionalism for the ICM I students. This year's conscience group therapy commenced 9/16.

By invitation, Meg and Matt will begin a new venture by offering "Understanding Conscience in Ethics and Faith Experience" at a local church. This will be conducted on six consecutive Sundays at 9 AM beginning 10/18.

Generating new revenue for the CONSCIENCE STUDY FUND.

The royalties generated in the past from traditionally published (by **Magination Press**, now an imprint of the American Psychological Association) psycho-educational titles eventually migrated to the **CONSCIENCE STUDY FUND** where they were added to the monetary gifts from donors. It should be noted that the development of **CW** itself (i.e. the website) was partly funded by a grant obtained by Sue L. with federal funds from the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, under Contract No. NO1-LM-1-3513. The psycho-educational titles we now publish electronically are donated by authors and illustrators to the **Conscience Project** and are made freely available to the public for downloading via **CW**. That will not change. However there are occasional requests for ready-made hard copies. On 8/13/09 Matt met with Janice G. at **New Perspectives (NP)** to discuss her interest in partnering with the **Conscience Project** in a limited publishing venture which could meet this demand. **CW** would post information on how to order (from **NP**) hardcopies of the selected titles. In the last six months Deb has made remarkable progress with her illuminations for **The Lyric of Lafracoth**, the play set in the early 12th century. A text-only version was put up on **CW** in 12/08 and, like other offerings, is freely available. Matt and Deb have met weekly to assimilate Deb's images in a new version of the manuscript with illuminations. The work in progress was uploaded and displayed on Jere's laptop at today's meeting. Discussion ensued. There was general enthusiasm for seeking a publishing partner. Once Deb has completed her work, a few hardcopies with illuminations can be prepared to show prospective publishers.

John discussed the relevance of **The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times** to the work he is doing with war veterans at the VA hospital. He highlighted work on distorted memories of combat and self forgiveness. He has been musing about the use of the word "Mecca" in common parlance, as in: "Such and such an institution is considered the Mecca of such and such expertise." He wondered: "What's Mecca the Mecca of?"

The next meeting will be 12/5/09.

Edited for **Conscience Chronicles**, 1/27/10 - Matthew Galvin